Claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended the claim to remove the phrase on which the Examiner based the rejection. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 20 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended the claim to remove the references to helium and aggressiveness. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 21 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended the claim to remove the reference to a "defined" temperature. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 29 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended the claim to delete the reference to an "elevated" temperature. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 6,162,367 to Tai et al. ("the Tai reference") in view of United States Patent No. 6,136,137 to Farnworth et al. ("the Farnworth reference"). Claim 28 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Tai reference in view of the Farnworth reference as applied to claim 16, and further in view of Butterbaugh et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,124,211. Claim 30 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tai reference in view of the Farnworth reference as applied to claim 16, and further in view of Barth, U.S. Patent No. 5,763,326. The Examiner has indicated that

respectfully submit that Claim 16 and its dependent Claims 17-25 and 27-30 are allowable over the applied references. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and allowance of the present application are therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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AMENDMENT VERSION WITH MARKINGS

In the Claims:

Claims 16, 17, 20, 21 and 29 have been amended as follows:

16. (Amended) A method for substantially eliminating at least one of eruptions, impurities and damage in a crystal lattice, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a surface-plated, sawn-out part of a silicon wafer;

selectively drying the at least one silicon element by heating the at least one silicon element with a radiation heater in a vacuum at a pressure of less than about 0.1 µbar; and

selectively etching at least one silicon element of the surface-plated, sawn-out part of the silicon wafer by bringing at least an area of the at least one silicon element into contact with a gaseous etching medium for etching silicon selectively in a chemical reaction, wherein gaseous reaction products are produced during the step of selectively etching.

17. (Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the gaseous etching medium includes a fluoride compound of the XFn type[one of an interhalogen compound, which is one of in a gaseous state and has been converted to the gaseous state, and a fluorine-noble gas compound, the fluorine-noble gas compound including at least one of chlorine trifluoride, bromine trifluoride, iodine pentafluoride and xenon difluoride].

20. (Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the gaseous etching medium is diluted with [at least one of]an inert gas [and helium]to control [at least one of an aggressiveness of the gaseous etching medium and]an etching rate.

21. (Amended) The method of claim 16, wherein at least a part of the gaseous etching medium is one of: convertable from a solid phase to the gaseous phase by thermal

introducing an inert gas using a bubbler; and convertable from one of the liquid phase and the solid phase to the gaseous phase based on a vapor pressure at a [defined]temperature.

29. (Amended) The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of removing, after performing the step of selectively etching in a reaction chamber, at least one of a leftover etching medium and a leftover reaction product from at least one etched silicon element in a vacuum in a load lock, the step of removing being performed at a pressure of less than about 0.1 μbar and at a[n elevated] temperature higher than during the step of selectively etching.